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Improving Student Engagement in Indonesian Language Learning Through Literacy-Based Learning in Elementary School.

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Abstract

This study aims to improve elementary students' Indonesian literacy learning engagement through the implementation of literacy-based learning. The study focuses on enhancing student engagement across key literacy-based activities, including reading, questioning, answering, discussing, and completing learning tasks. This research employed classroom action research (CAR), conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. The participants were 28 fifth-grade student. Data were collected through observation and documentation using a student engagement observation sheet. The data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative methods by calculating the percentage of student engagement in each cycle. The findings revealed a significant improvement in student engagement within the literacy learning process. In Cycle I, only 50% of students were categorized as active , whereas in Cycle II, 100% of students reached the active and very active categories. These results indicate that literacy-based learning is effective in improving students' learning engagement and participation during Indonesian literacy lessons. It also creates a more interactive and meaningful learning environment.

Keywords– *literacy-based learning, student engagement, elementary education*

1. Introduction

Literacy is a fundamental skill in elementary education that enables students to understand, analyze, and communicate information effectively (Nurjamin et al., 2026). However, in practice, many students still demonstrate low engagement in reading activities, questioning, and classroom discussion (Mutiarah et al., 2025). This condition negatively affects their comprehension and overall learning outcomes (Wartono et al., 2026). Previous studies have shown that literacy-based learning can improve students' reading comprehension and participation (Alwi et al., 2024). Based on preliminary observations conducted through interviews with the homeroom teacher and classroom observations using a structured student engagement checklist at SDN Banyuajuh 3, it was revealed that only 50% of the 28 fifth-grade students were categorized as active in classroom learning activities. The remaining students showed passive behavior, such as reluctance to ask questions, lack of response to teacher prompts, and low participation in peer discussions. This empirical evidence indicates that current teaching practices have not fully supported the development of students' literacy learning engagement (Sunismi et al., 2026).

Although previous literature acknowledges the general benefits of literacy-based frameworks, significant research gaps still remain, particularly regarding its implementation in fostering active classroom engagement. Teoretitically, existing literacy frameworks often treat engagement as a secondary byproduct of cognitive instruction rather than a primary driver of literacy acquisition. Empirically, while many studies investigate the impact of literacy strategies on direct reading scores or test outcomes, few provide a detailed, cyclical analysis of how specific literacy-based learning stages—such as structured questioning and collaborative reading—gradually transform passive students into active participants. Contextually, there is a lack of evidence regarding how Classroom Action Research (CAR) can be tailored to overcome low participation in Indonesian elementary classrooms, where rote learning often limits student expression (Saputra et al., 2025).

To bridge these gaps, this study offers a distinct novelty by focusing strictly on the mechanics of student engagement within literacy instruction. Rather than merely assessing reading comprehension scores, this research directly addresses the behavioral and collaborative dynamics of fifth-grade students through a tailored literacy-based learning model. To guide this inquiry, the study addresses the following explicit research question: *How can literacy-based learning improve students' engagement in*

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Indonesian literacy learning? Consequently, this study aims to systematically improve students' learning engagement and active participation during Indonesian literacy lessons through the execution of structured, literacy-based classroom action cycles (Islamiyah et al., 2025).

2. Method

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was conducted systematically in two cycles following the spiral model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (Mahardika et al., 2026). Each cycle consisted of four interrelated stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Turahmat et al., 2023). The participants of this study were 28 fifth-grade students at SDN Banyuajuh 3. Data were collected using classroom observation and documentation techniques to capture a comprehensive overview of the learning process.

The primary research instrument was a structured student engagement observation sheet designed to measure student behavior during literacy-based instruction (Wijaya et al., 2025). This instrument comprises 5 main indicators with a total of 10 specific descriptors: (1) paying attention to teacher explanations and reading materials, (2) asking relevant questions, (3) answering questions, (4) participating actively in group discussions, and (5) completing literacy tasks on time. To ensure the reliability and scientific rigor of the instrument, content validity was established through expert judgment involving two university senior lecturers in primary education, ensuring all descriptors were appropriate for fifth-grade students. Student behavior for each descriptor was evaluated using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Poor), 2 (Fair), 3 (Good), to 4 (Excellent).

The data obtained from the observation sheets were analyzed using descriptive quantitative methods to calculate the individual score and the classical percentage of student engagement in each cycle (Anggraeni et al., 2024). The percentage of student engagement score was calculated using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{S}{N} \text{ X } 100$$

Where P is the percentage of student engagement, S is the total score obtained by the student, and N is the maximum possible score. The calculated percentages

were then categorized into four levels based on classroom assessment standards: 0%–49% as Passive, 50%–69% as Moderately Active, 70%–84% as Active, and 85%–100% as Very Active (Lubbiya & Liansari, 2026). The success criterion for this classroom action research was defined as achieving a condition where at least 70% of the total students in the classroom reached minimum criteria of being categorized as Active or Very Active. This 70% benchmark serves as a standard indicator of effective collaborative learning environments where the majority of students successfully shift from teacher-centered to student-centered participation.

Table 1. Classroom Action Research Design

Group	***Planning***	**Acting**	***Observing***	***Reflecting***
Cycle I	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cycle II	✓	✓	✓	✓

3. Result and Discussion

The results of this classroom action research indicate that student engagement improved significantly following the systematic implementation of literacy-based learning. The quantitative transformation of student learning participation across the two cycles is compiled and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Engagement Descriptive Statistics Result

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cycle I	28	39.00	90.00	61.04	14.00
Cycle II	28	75.00	100.00	94.61	7.30
Valid N (listwise)	28				

Based on the statistical parameters in Table 2, a clear positive trajectory in student engagement is evident. In Cycle I, the mean score for student engagement was 61.04 (categorized as Moderately Active), with a wide minimum-maximum variance ranging from 39.00 to 90.00. This wide baseline variance and a standard deviation of 14.00 reflect high disparity in classroom participation during the early implementation phase. However, after reflective modifications were applied in Cycle II, the mean engagement score surged substantially to 94.61 (categorized as

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Very Active), while the minimum score increased to 75.00. The standard deviation also narrowed significantly to 7.30, indicating that student engagement became highly consistent and uniformly distributed across the classroom (Nurul Hidayat et al., 2026).

An explicit breakdown of student distribution based on behavioral categories further clarifies this progression. In Cycle I, 14 students (50%) were categorized as active, while the remaining 14 students (50%) were categorized as moderately active (Kusmaharti et al., 2025). No students managed to reach the very active tier. This baseline finding confirms that student engagement was still unstable and relatively low during the initial intervention. Following the execution of reflective adjustments in Cycle II, a remarkable shift occurred: 14 students (52%) escalated into the very active category, and 14 students (48%) were categorized as active. Cumulatively, 100% of the students successfully fulfilled and surpassed the pre-established success criterion of 70% active participation (Yudhistia et al., 2025).

The success of Cycle II was driven by deliberate structural improvements designed to target specific behavioral bottlenecks identified during the reflection of Cycle I. The intervention shifted from generic literacy tasks to highly structured cooperative actions, including guided strategic reading activities, collaborative peer-group discussions, and enhanced scaffolding techniques to encourage passive students (Jayanti et al., 2024; Munawaroh et al., 2025).

Analyses of the observation sheets revealed a profound qualitative transformation in student behavior during these actions. The largest behavioral growth was identified in two specific indicators: *asking questions* and *discussion participation*. In Cycle I, students exhibited a passive reliance on the teacher; they rarely initiated inquiries and tended to remain silent during group sessions due to a lack of confidence or unfamiliarity with the reading texts. In Cycle II, the introduction of visual literacy prompts and guided question-cards drastically lowered the psychological barrier to participation. Students became highly cooperative and confident in formulating relevant questions, articulating independent ideas, and defending their opinions within small groups (Purnama et al., 2022). Furthermore, the indicator of *task completion* also showed excellent

progress, as students began finishing their literacy worksheets promptly without requiring constant teacher enforcement.

The psychological and pedagogical mechanics behind why literacy-based learning successfully drives student engagement can be explained through the lens of active and meaningful learning environments. By integrating contextual reading materials with collaborative discussion, the learning design shifts the student's role from a passive recipient of text to an active constructor of meaning. The structured questioning phases provide a clear communicative purpose, transforming literacy from a solitary, rote task into a dynamic, social experience. These findings are highly consistent with previous contemporary literature, which underscores that embedding interactive literacy tasks within a collaborative framework effectively enhances critical thinking skills, boosts intrinsic motivation, and fosters long-term classroom engagement (Sari, H. P., et al., 2026; Papuanga et al., 2025).

Despite its positive outcomes, this study acknowledges several inherent limitations. First, as a Classroom Action Research design, the findings are context-bound and limited to a sample size of 28 fifth-grade students in one specific school, meaning the results cannot be generalized broadly to all elementary settings. Second, the evaluation relies heavily on observation instruments, which are susceptible to observer bias, although this was mitigated through rigorous rubric design and triangulation. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope by combining engagement observations with longitudinal cognitive literacy testing across multiple school districts to gain a more comprehensive outlook.

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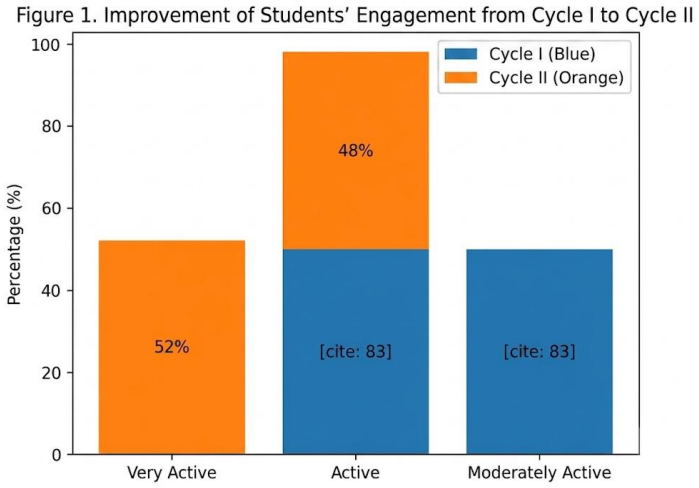

Figure1. Improvement of Students' Engagement from cycle I to Cyle II

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of literacy-based learning is highly effective in improving fifth-grade students' engagement and active participation during Indonesian literacy lessons. The integration of structured reading strategies, collaborative peer discussions, and interactive question-card prompts successfully transforms classroom dynamics, shifting students from passive recipients to active contributors. Quantitatively, this approach successfully achieved the target performance indicator, with student engagement rising from an unstable 50% active rate in Cycle I to a uniform 100% in the active and very active categories by the end of Cycle II. This classroom action research demonstrates that student-centered literacy actions can systematically lower psychological barriers to participation and foster a more vibrant learning environment.

This study carries important practical implications for elementary education. For teachers, these findings suggest that literacy should not be taught merely as an isolated cognitive skill, but through interactive, social designs that encourage students to articulate ideas and debate meanings. School principals can utilize this model to formulate professional development workshops aimed at training educators to design engagement-driven literacy lesson plans. Furthermore, while

this action research successfully resolved the immediate participation crisis in the observed classroom, its context-bound nature limits broader generalization. Therefore, future researchers are highly recommended to expand upon this study by integrating engagement metrics with standardized cognitive literacy tests and exploring the scalability of this literacy-based model across diverse elementary grade levels and larger school districts.

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